



An ax rests in an ice wall as Greg Grant and Kim West traverse the top edge of the mountain to get a better look at the face they've climbed.

ICE

Continued from C1

"Every time you take a whack with the ax, your body loses energy."

"Look at her left arm," Culberson points at West hammering away at the ice for a hold. "It's weak. You can tell she's climbed before, but she's just not used to this."

Even though West can't seem to get the ax in right away, she's still doing well.

Despite the need for an aggressive approach, there is also a definite mental component to ice climbing.

"You have to listen to the ice," Culberson says.

Climbers have to determine how safe the surface is. They must see if it is brittle, "plastic" or slushy. They must find the fractures in surfaces where they place their tools. And they must realize that with each situation there is a different technique.

There are other aspects of the ice that climbers must pay attention to:

The color. Solid ice is blue or blue green.

How thick or thin the ice is and

how well the ice is bonded to the underlying rock surface.

There are literally so many different personalities to ice that a climber needs to be so attentive.

"There has been a rise in accidents," says Culberson. "People who climb mainly indoors don't understand. They're not used to the variables, the conditions."

Climbers must deal with their fatigue and their fear.

"When I first started, I was terrified, sometimes I still am,"

Culberson says. "It took me quite some time before I could manage my fear."

He says he doesn't know why he climbs. Then why do it?

"I have no life?" Culberson laughs. "It's the movement, the way of going up the ice."

West is finishing her climb.

She reaches the top of the ledge, disappears, then re-emerges. Grant, below gives the rope some tension and slack, supporting her, as he belays — secures — West. She rappels down.

Once at the bottom, West smiles.

She's done it. Now on to her first real climb in Peru.

"I called to tell my mother what I was doing," says West. "She can't understand why I like to do this stuff. It's all about the challenge."

WILSON **FOX TROT**

BY BILL AMEND

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"Conscience is e-mail your head gets from Heaven."

KidSpot

FIND THE WORDS. THE NAMES
OF THE PICTURE CLUES ARE
HIDDEN IN THE SQUARE. CIRCLE EACH WORD, GOING ACROSS,
DOWN OR DIAGONALLY.